

# Ballymun Youth Action Project

April 2015



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# The Newsletter



## Aontas Star Awards 2015

In our last newsletter we featured an article on the Boxing Clever Programme, a 20 week sports & education rehabilitation programme run by YAP and R&I, for stabilised and drug free individuals. The programme was recently shortlisted for the Aontas Star Award (the award recognises outstanding contribution to learner- based education projects) The awards ceremony was held in the Ballsbridge Hotel, Dublin on February 23rd. A total of 72 projects and over 300 hundred participants and staff from all over Ireland attended the event. The boxing clever was shortlisted for an award within the Leinster category. Feeling confident in the programme a group from Ballymun went to the Awards Ceremony to represent us in case we were successful. We were delighted and very proud to hear our name being called to say we had won the Aontas star award for Leinster 2015.

Well done to Karl, Michael and all involved. We're happy all your dedication and commitment has been recognised nationally,

**Congratulations.**



**BOXINGCLEVER**

My name is Michael, I was on drugs for 20 years. During my time on drugs I got bad health and kept having to go to hospital. I got liver disease and decided to get clean because the doctor gave me three months to live. I decided to sort my life out.



Eventually I got a liver transplant on the 27th of December 2014. I started to get better and now I am enjoying life. Drugs destroyed my marriage and family. I am three years off drink and drugs. I thank God for giving me a second chance in life. I would advise people to think about drugs. It will destroy your health and life. **Michael.**

I did my student placement from UCD in YAP and it was truly a life learning experience. I was fortune to meet many various groups and individuals and I'd like to thank all of you, with great sincerity for your warm welcome. It was a privilege to observe your dedication to change this was truly my best learning to date. It captivated my learning and understanding of the continuum of care, the respect provided, no matter what stage people were at in the cycle of addiction. I found the care and professional approach of the staff gave me a true meaning to understanding "working with people where people are at". I was fortune to experience the skill set, expertise and understanding each and all employees demonstrated while supporting clients and each other. It was also good to see the many other services / professionals working in the community, who also deliver care in Ballymun.

It is apparent how much hard work also goes into the area of funding and fundraising for the services as they can not solely rely on

outside funding. The true meaning of community also stood out very much in every aspect, from the warm, very professional, collaborative way the work was carried out. Many people from all walks of life receive support in YAP, this was another piece of learning from my placement.

Thanks to you all for allowing me to do my student placement with you. **Lorraine**



Silloque Avenue



**The following words were covered in the programme lately. How many can you find?**

Aural	Demonstration	Dictionary	Graphs	Heard	Interests	Value
Methods	Simulated	Profile	Sensory	Symbols	Diagrams	Sight
Grasped	Boundaries	Hobbies	Lectures	Personal	Visual	Style
Thesaurus	Experience	Reality				

### **Certificate Presentation Night**

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2014 the weather was dreadful but the welcome in YAP was warm and inviting. It was great to be getting my CASC cert, after a lot of hard work and to reconnect with others off my course and the atmosphere was brilliant. We were very lucky to have a private mini concert from the fantastic Glen Hansard along with crowd participation. A really enjoyable night. *Thanks VJ*







On the 16th of March, The Herald ran the following story with the headline  
**"More than 3,300 heroin addicts have been on a HSE sponsored methadone programme for 10 years or more"**

Over the last three years, it has cost the state nearly €55m to administer methadone to around 10,000 addicts. Sources estimate that running the methadone programme for the last 20 years could cost up to €200m. Currently it is running at almost €20m a year. The stark figures released by the HSE also show that 178 people have been on the methadone programme for more than 20 years.

With the average current cost of maintaining someone on methadone running at more than €1,700 a year, questions have been asked about the success of the programme which is designed to replace heroin with a less dangerous medication - ultimately with the aim of weaning them off drugs. At current expenditure levels, the cost of keeping one person on methadone for 20 years is €34,000.

Billy Kelleher (FF) has said a full independent assessment of the methadone programme is needed to see if it is the right one for all of those that are on it.

"Methadone itself is relatively cheap and there is a risk that it just gets dispensed to keep addicts quiet and reduce the risk of them committing crime when actually many who are on it might benefit from a different treatment," "Some addicts have been on methadone for many years, and a review of the system is now needed by government." Mr Kelleher said.

Meanwhile, Tony Geoghegan of the Merchants Quay project, has said it can be debated if the current methadone treatment system is suitable for all those on it. "Methadone is intended to take people out of the vicious cycle of criminality but it can be argued that the current system does not provide a follow-through with a personal treatment plan to help people move forward," he said. "There are thousands of people who have been on methadone for 10 years or more, and scores who have been on it for more than 20 years. I would only see the current system as a partial success. It maintains people rather than moves them on." Mr Geoghegan explained.

Latest figures show that 7,425 (70% of total registered addicts) being treated with methadone in Ireland, are in Dublin.

More people are seeking treatment for heroin addiction in Dublin's north inner city than anywhere else in the country.

The numbers also reveal that Tallaght has roughly the same number of heroin addicts seeking treatment as in the south inner city.

The HSE Bray local district task force area had the smallest number seeking help in 2013 at 158.

The number of people who are in treatment at the end of a year is also growing, with 9,251 in treatment at the end of 2011; 9,419 at the end of 2012, and 9,655 at the end of 2013.

There are now 663 pharmacies around the country dispensing opioid substitutes, a rise of 126 (23%) in just four years.

But despite the massive government spend the number of addicts is rising instead of falling.

*What do you think? we would be delighted to hear your thoughts,*

“The Reduce The Use Programme” ended in December 2014. All 8 participants who started the programme, finished the programme successfully. The programme consisted of ten, two hour sessions, run twice a week. The course was made up of the following sessions;

Session 1	Introducing the Concepts	Session 6	Personal Action Plan
Session 2	The Role of Thoughts and Beliefs	Session 7	Refusal Skills
Session 3	The Role of Thoughts and Beliefs	Session 8	Cravings and Support Systems
Session 4	Changing our thoughts	Session 9	Relapse Prevention
Session 5	Identifying goals	Session 10	Course Reflection



The Programme aims to support participants who are having problems with their drug / alcohol use and to focus on giving participants the means to reduce, refuse or stop taking whatever drug or drugs that are causing problems in their life. In our evaluation all participants scored the programme highly for helping them understand drug / alcohol triggers, what high risk situations are, learning to deal with cravings more effectively, developing new refusal skills and reducing the harm to yourself by using a safe plan.

Some quotes from participants during the final session included “ I plan to use the tools given to me on the RTU programme ”, “ I’ve learned I’m much more than my ex led me to believe ”, “ I had never heard of people places & things”.

The facilitators, Gary & Wayne, thought the programme improved participants self esteem and self confidence along with giving them an understanding of their addictive behaviours. It also taught participants how to set goals around reducing their use and gave them an opportunity to learn new skills.

We will be running another Reduce the Use Programme later this year, if you think it would help you to be make some positive changes in your life contact one of the staff in YAP.

### Student Reflection

I really enjoyed my placement from the Urrus Community Drug and Alcohol Work Course with BYAP and a special thanks for the support, planning and being there. I felt safe to get involved in whatever was put forward knowing that others knew what was going on and it was okay for me to take risks. I learned a lot about the work and how it has developed so much over the years yet held onto its core values and aims.



I was conscious of how much reflection and critical thinking has been employed in the development of services and the changes that have occurred. I was also impressed with the way in which staff rolled up sleeves and got stuck into other parts of the agency, making their faces more visible and making the experience of those coming in, less demarked. I was able to join in a number of groups and see what was happening. I was welcomed into the Communications group who were working hard. I also joined the After-care support group for a session. I was struck by the groups sense of humour and having a few laughs along the way with people. I was also part of the drop-in and met others through the street work with the Contact Team. One man we met talked about doing the Boxing Clever programme, how good it was and his learning. I spent time at the reception desk and met people coming and going.

I learned a lot from people I spoke with including the challenges they faced. I also heard about changes people had made in their lives, which were hard to make, but also how good they felt about the change. When I finished my placement, I was so glad that groups and people who come to BYAP had let me in. Thank you to each and every one who took the time to talk and share some of your story with me. As I leave BYAP and continue my journey, I wish you well on yours. Thank you, **Angela**

## Benzodiazepines

*An extract from VJ's CASC project on Benzodiazepines.*

Benzo's are a highly addictive sedative that has been prescribed since the 1950's. Benzo's depress the physical functions of the brain and other parts of the central nervous system. They are classified as depressants and prescribed for anxiety, insomnia, depression and other mental health issues. In the early days Benzo's were prescribed as they were deemed safer than barbituates.

Benzodiazepines are both physically and psychologically addictive. Your body will crave it and your mind finds it harder to cope with everyday life. Your tolerance levels build up and you have to increase the amount taken to sustain your feelings of relaxation. By the mid 1970's Valium was the most frequently prescribed drug in the world. It was the 1980's before it was noticed that people being prescribed Benzodiazepines over a long period were showing signs of dependency. Some of the brand names of these drugs include Valium, Dalmane, Librium, Xanax, Halicon and Temazapian. Having been around for so long they have acquired many street names, such as Roche, D's D 10's, Roofies, Sleepers, Moggies & Downers.

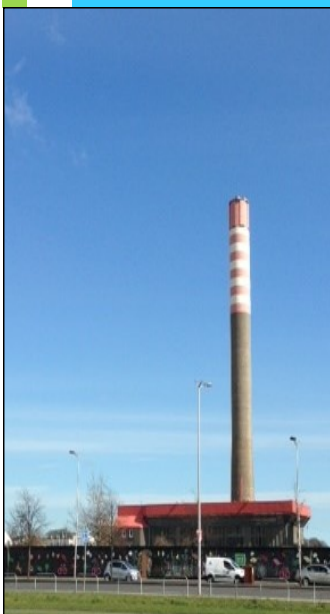
These drugs can be very dangerous for a pregnant woman, increasing the risk of the child being born with a cleft palate. Using high doses of benzo's before the baby's delivery can seriously affect the baby's breathing at birth and can result in death. The baby may have withdrawals for between two to four weeks after delivery and the baby may also find it difficult to suck. Risk of cot death also increases with use of benzo's during pregnancy.

It is very dangerous for someone with an addiction to benzo's to just stop without medical assistance.

The withdrawals from these drugs can be fatal. Withdrawals can be experienced between one and seven days after last use and these withdrawals can last several months. Symptoms of withdrawal include anxiety, confusion, day sweats, night sweats, cramps and in extreme cases serious convulsions (Benzo Fits) if use is stopped suddenly. It is also dangerous to mix Benzo's with other sedatives type substances such as alcohol or heroin as it increases the risk of fatal overdose. Rohypnol or Roofies, which are also a type of Benzo have been linked to "date rape" and other sexual assaults.

It was in the mid 1980's when I became aware of the women in my community using and swapping tablets. They would swap the tablets for milk, bread, smokes, potatoes, etc. They were used as a type of currency in our flats and it was an everyday occurrence. It was socially acceptable and "the norm" in most homes around the community. Most people didn't think of it as problematic because "the doctor gave them to me" so they must be ok or you would hear statements such as "it's not like I am doing heroin" which at the time was looked upon as a "filthy" drug, used just by scumbags and lowlives.

People didn't seem to understand the harm in Benzodiazepines because they were so widely available and it was easy to "give the doctor a sob story for more" and it was more often the women who would get extra prescriptions. They would go to several chemists and change all their prescriptions in the one day but that stopped when everything began to be recorded on computers.





Many people on methadone treatment programmes are also be prescribed Benzo's and almost all the people who were under the care of the psychiatric doctor would be prescribed some form of Benzo. It wasn't a major drug of addiction in most people's eyes because they weren't aware of its highly addictive properties. It wasn't a problem until they couldn't get them, people realised they were in trouble and they were dependent on those little pills.

In time, as addiction progressed, we began to experience more and more family breakdowns. As the addiction took hold, whether it was the mother or the father, it was usually the non-addicted parent that would leave the home and in doing so many children were left behind to cope alone in the chaos. It became a huge responsibility usually for the eldest child to care for younger siblings and more often the addicted parent. A culture of adolescents caring for their families while the addicted parent slipped further into addiction was created. Because of learnt behaviour and highly stressful lives, these children would become high risk to repeat the cycle and become addicts themselves. Increasing the potential that tablet taking would be carried down through generations of the family unless attitudes and understanding changed.

With that addiction comes a whole new set of problems. To feed habits people will do almost anything and so run the risk of getting involved in robberies, drug dealing and shop lifting to name a few. These negative actions have a negative effect on the community not to mention the worry for some of their parents. To feed their habit, a woman in addiction may also turn to prostitution or illegal massage parlours, putting themselves highly at risk. Addiction is heart-breaking and is a big part of this community for as long as I can remember. It has taken many lives, young and old, broken up families and left only devastation.

In 2001 findings from a report compiled by YAP entitled "Benzodiazepines – Whose Little Helper?" listed some of the following key findings;

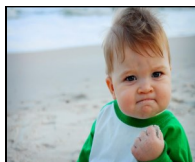
- The family is the first point of contact with benzo's for many people
- Benzo use is not specific to any one age group
- The use of benzo's is seen as very normalised within the Ballymun context

Conclusion; After looking at lots of information I have come to the conclusion that Benzo addiction can be one of the most devastating addiction because the reasons people begin using them are the very thing that can make it almost impossible to get clean from. So in helping the individual we must support the families of the addicted to change their attitudes. Although we have a ways to go I personally think that there has been a big positive shift in people's attitudes towards Benzo's. **VJ**



### Back In The Day

Back in the day  
life was shite,  
day was long  
and so was night.  
Getting high made them pass so swiftly by.  
Way back then, there were no goals  
just humps and bumps and deep dark holes.



Now at last another chance  
to take another look at me, a glance  
at all the things that have gone by,  
the who's, the where's, the when's and why?  
Things get easier as you get along and  
to figure out where you went wrong.  
All these things will find their place  
now you've stopped getting out of you face.

Looking forward to what's in store,  
no more drugs and that's for sure.  
So many great things for me to do  
that day didn't drag, it bleedin flew.  
Now I need no more chances, please  
thanks God, these days will go with ease.

**Dan**

### Digging Her Grave With A Silver Spoon

She digs her grave with a silver spoon  
knowing damn well  
what she is fucking doing.

Can't he see the evil in her eye  
no, he's not that good of a spy.

She thinks she's oh so cool  
because she knows how to get the mixture  
together on the spoon.

And there she is,  
trying to get a vein  
so she can go into oblivion again.

And there she is,  
begging God to get her one more vein  
so she will be so stoned  
that she won't remember her name.

**Rachel**

### Aontas Awards 2015

I'm 35 and have just completed the boxing clever course. I would just like to tell you a little about my experience and how it changed my life. I had just finished residential treatment and was feeling a little lost with no direction in my life. I heard about boxing clever from some friends who were doing course, and I thought I would give it a go. Oh my God, besides giving up drugs it was the best decision that I have ever made.

It changed my life in many ways; it gave me back my confidence, my self-worth. It gave me a structure when I needed it the most. Throughout the course I made so many new friends. We were at all different stages in our recovery which helped because for some that weren't quite there yet it set them a goal and it gave others a chance to help them along too.

I learnt so much about myself and the person I want to become. While on the course I had the privilege of being asked to represent the group at the Aontas awards. I had to sit in front of the judges and tell them how the boxing clever has helped me change my life. I got quite emotional (scarlet) in front of the judges when I actually thought how far I have come. Myself, Dave who was on the course, Billy the mentor, Frank, our kick ass fitness instructor, Karl & Michael who run the programme, went to the Ballsbridge Hotel for the award ceremony.

Well let me tell you, I thought I was at the Bafta's, the place was amazing, a great big stage, chandeliers, great big centre pieces, and a brilliant choir. The place was buzzing you could feel the excitement in the air. All the categories were called out one by one, our name was shortlisted for the Leinster region and we were sitting there all nervous. I needn't tell you the anticipation was killing me and then they called out the winner "Boxing Clever", Ah Jaysus, it was like winning the lotto. The feeling was indescribable; it was a day and a dinner I will never forget. From there my confidence has grown, it's the first programme I have ever finished in my life, and I am so proud of myself. I am now applying for college.

All because I took a chance to believe in myself and applied for the boxing clever programme. The first step was the hardest but the rewards have been more than I ever thought. I would like to thank Michael & Karl for believing in me and giving me a chance, because of that I am one step closer to achieving my dreams. **D.P.**





An extract from Pat Tierneys "The Moon On My Back".

### Continued from Christmas Issue

Over two years had elapsed since my HIV diagnosis and I decided it was time to speak to someone and educate myself about the virus. I contacted St. James and met with a counselor. He explained what was known about the virus and how a healthy lifestyle would help keep my immune system. I go there every 12 weeks to have blood tests, which determine the level of damage being caused by the virus.

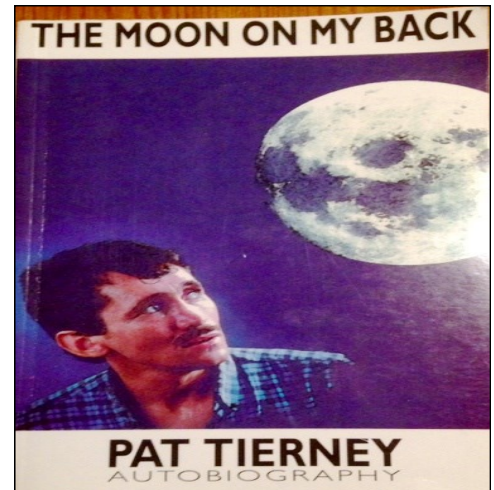
I had begun to reveal to more people that I was HIV positive. Initially I would tell a friend that I had just gotten bad news, a friend of mine had revealed to me that he was HIV positive and I didn't know how to take the news, how should I take it and how would they react if someone they knew well admitted to being HIV positive? I would decide whether or not to tell that person my situation, based on their answers to my questions. Most people I told were initially shocked and saddened, and this was followed by a pledge to stand by me and support me in any way they could. For instance, I got two kidney infections early in 1992 and was house bound with them. A friend, Jude McHugh, who had two children in the Rhymers Club, used to come over to visit me twice a day to try and keep my spirits up and bring me anything I needed from the shops or the chemist. That kind of support is essential to someone in my situation.

At this point I am in stage 3, basically my immune system has been noticeably damaged by the virus. When I reach stage 4, I will be considered to have full blown AIDS. I may live for several years after I reach that stage, though chances of that are slim. I have not come to terms with the idea of dying a slow, painful death. I wish I had the option of euthanasia. Unfortunately, the laws and constitution demand that I die in as slow a manner as medical science can make possible. Fortunately, however, the state cannot prevent me from taking matters into my own hands. That possible option I would obviously hold until the disease has dealt enough body blows to make me immobile or incapacitated to the point where I can no longer set goals and go about achieving them.

Let me not give the impression here that I am pessimistic about the immediate and near future. Nothing could be further from the truth. I intend publishing a collection of poems sometime next year. I intend to continue to encourage others to take up the bardic life-style, because I feel that the more we become industrialised, computerised and every other sort of "ised", the more important our culture and particularly the spoken word will be in keeping us human and emotional beings.

I opened this book with an account of a dream I had as a freckly-faced, bony kneed, 13 year old. I interpret the moon in my dream as representing my past. I am now living at the point where I have stopped running and turned around to confront the past. I did not turn around in my dream and confront the moon voluntarily, circumstances dictated my action. In reality I cannot prevent my past from rolling over me. It continues to roll as each new blood test reveals that my immune system is being irreparably damaged. It is rolling as I write the final words in this book and it will continue to roll until I become another statistic of AIDS or suicide.

*In 1996 Pat Tierney took his life. In an interview with a Sunday newspaper reporter he revealed his plan to commit suicide and a few days after the tragic event the story was published. In his life he had achieved some recognition as a writer, an AIDS campaigner and a public figure in Ireland who gave a voice to many of those who would normally have remained unheard.*



## Counselling Survey Result

Between the 19th and 23rd of January YAP ran a small survey of people attending individual counselling. We were interested to see what peoples experience of the counselling service was. We used a questionnaire called "The Session Rating Scale". The questionnaire asks four questions covering areas such as the counselling relationship, work on goals / relevant topics, the counsellors approach and the overall experience. People were asked to score these areas from 1 to 10.

29 people took part in the survey and the results were very positive. The average score for question 1 was 9.6, question 2 was 9.4, question 3 was 9.7 and question 4 was 9.5. We are always interested in improving our service, so suggestions and feedback are most welcome.

Many thanks to all who took part in the survey.

**For up to date information on all available services, upcoming programmes, news, courses, and events please like us on "Facebook"**



## Alcohol and Calories

A glass of wine has the same calories as a slice of cake, a pint of lager has the same calories as a burger and an alcopop the same as 100g of cookies. A survey in 2009 also revealed that the average wine drinker consumes 2,000 extra calories each month and over the course of a year, that's the same as eating 184 bags of crisps.

Calories from alcohol are "empty calories" – they have no nutritional value. Drinking alcohol reduces the amount of fat your body burns for energy. While we can store nutrients, proteins, carbohydrates and fat in our bodies, we can't store alcohol, so our systems want to get rid of it – and doing so takes priority. All the other processes that should be taking place, for example, absorbing nutrients and burning fat are interrupted. Along with drinking alcohol comes the temptation to eat fattening snacks, crisps, peanuts, chips for example as this adds to the overall calorie intake for a session on the drink. The calories soon add up over the night.....



Vodka /Gin & tonic	126	Rum and coke	142	Pint of cider	215
Bottle of white wine	555	Bottle of red wine	510	Pint of lager	240
		Pint of stout	210		

**People enjoying lunch with Mairead**





### **BYAP "Friend Remembering Friends"**

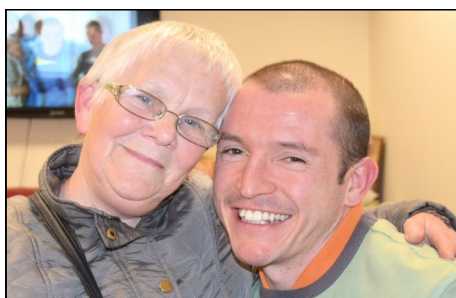
The annual Friends Remembering Friends event was held in the Holy Spirit Church on the 23rd of February 2015 and it was such a lovely night. Each year there is a theme – this is used as a focus for the night but also seen as a way of reflecting on the past and looking to the year ahead. The theme, this year, was Hope. A short movie of what gives people hope started the evening. We have a beautiful waterfall made by BRYR with inspirational stones of hope for each person to take on the night. Poems were read and songs were sung, a very uplifting night.



It was my first time to go to the Friends Remembering Friends night in the Holy Spirit Church. I am not a church going person and I tend to stay away from churches as much as possible. I went because I just thought it would be something different from the usual norm of masses. There was not a bad turn out and I knew a lot of the people there, some I hadn't seen in a long time. There was a slide show of words people had said about what gives them hope, just reading some of the words you could feel the love and loss of friends gone. Fr McVerry did the ceremony and some people went up and spoke a few words. The choir or musicians did a great job and livened up the event so it didn't have to seem like a sombre affair. The girl singing the operatic song had an amazing voice and another younger girl also sang, someone commented that her singing was better than anything you'd see or hear on the X factor and I have to agree. There was a part when everyone was asked to go up to the altar and take a stone in remembrance of someone loved and gone. The majority of everyone went up and got a stone. It was nice to go to and I was happy I went. Afterwards everyone was invited back to YAP for tea and sandwiches. I went but didn't stay long but I did have some tea and biscuits. Thanks **PH**



**People enjoying some refreshments in YAP after the Friends Remembering Friends Service**





### YAP - Ballymun Youth Action Project

Horizons Centre, Balcurris Rd - Tel: 01 8428071

### Domville House Treatment Centre

Main Street, Ballymun - Tel: 01 8620111

### Contact Service

Evening and weekend services which provides drug and alcohol advice, information and Support Tel: 086 -7915053; 086 - 2482858.

### Rehabilitation / Integration Service

Axis, Main Street, Ballymun, Dublin 9

Contact Michael Tel: 01 8832107

### Ballymun Job Centre

Ballymun Shopping Centre  
Tel: 01 866 7000

### YAP - Aftercare

Support for Recovering Drug Users  
Phone Chris or Emer 01 8428071

### The Star Project

Horizons Centre, Balcurris Road

Tel: 01 8467930

### DePaul Trust Case Management Team

Tel: 01 8623728

### Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force

Axis, Main Street, Ballymun - 01 8832142

### Ballymun Regional Youth Resource ( BRYP )

The Reco, Sillogue Road - 01 8667600

### The CARE Project

Axis, Main Street, Ballymun — 087-9159177

### Ballymun Family Support Service

Horizons Centre, Balcurris Road,  
Tel 01 846 7930

## Farewell to Mairead

In 1993 Mairead started working in YAP as a part-time Addiction Counsellor. She wasn't long in that part time post before she was taken on as a full time Addiction Counsellor. After 22 years working here, Mairead has decided to say her farewells. In March, we were pleased to be able to extend an invite to some people, to join us, for a intimate lunch with Mairead.

We are fortunate to have met such a special person, a person that we care so much about and someone, who through her interactions has been able to touch the lives of many people. Saying goodbye to Mairead is hard. As we say goodbye, we remind ourselves that farewells are not forever, nor are they the end. They are simply words to say that we will miss you dearly and that we will remember you fondly.

YAP would like to thank Mairead for her many years of service to the organisation, the quality of her work and the unselfish sharing of her knowledge and experience. We thank Mairead for sharing in some amazing times, wonderful memories and helping us on our journey. We wish Mairead lots of blessings and hope she has many pleasant days ahead of her with her family.

May the road rise up to meet you Mairead, may the wind be ever at your back, may the sun shine warm upon your face and the rain fall softly on your fields, and until we meet again Mairead, may God hold you in the palm of his hand - *Irish Blessing*

